

eastern Australia where a similar species, *Sterna striata*, is a regular visitor from New Zealand. Moreover in the same area another species, *Sterna hirundo*, has been recently found to be a rare visitor from the Northern Hemisphere. All writers with experience of the two species emphasize the difficulty in distinguishing between *macrura* and *hirundo* in eclipse plumage.

In Western Australia *macrura* should not be so easily confused with other species of this group — medium-sized terns with white caps and long, deeply forked tails. For *striata* does not visit this State nor, as far as we know, does *hirundo* (but as it is a common winter visitor to the Malayo-Papuan Archipelago, we should not be surprised if some birds straggled down the Western Australian coast). Another similar species, the Roseate Tern (*S. dougalli*) is extremely rare south of the Abrolhos. There is a chance that individuals have been carelessly dismissed as Marsh Terns (as I nearly did in this instance).

Then the species may be oceanic in these latitudes, which would seem to be supported by the fact that the first two specimens taken in Australia were apparently blown on to land by storms. But against this we must count the presence of at least two individuals in sheltered waters for a week, six miles from the sea.

Thirdly, we must consider the great extent of the Australian coastline and the high average speed at which sea-birds are known to migrate. It follows that at any one place on our coast the chances are against our seeing the species during the short period it spends in our waters. At Heard and Macquarie Islands the position is different, though there, too, the birds are only passage migrants. These islands, surrounded by hundreds of miles of ocean, probably "trap" for a while all terns that pass within sight of them.

#### REFERENCES

- Downes, M. C., 1952. Arctic Terns in the Subantarctic, *Emu*, 52: 306-310.  
Hitchcock, W. B., 1952. An Australian Specimen of the Arctic Tern, *Emu*, 52: 68-69.  
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### FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**Whimbrel on Rottneest in Winter.**—On June 22, 1955 we saw a solitary Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*) on the headland at Cape Vlaming, Rottneest Island.

—G. M. DUNNET and L. MACLEAN, Nedlands.

**A large flock of Little Eagles.**—In the early morning of April 9, 1955, seventeen Little Eagles (an unusually large number for this district) were observed together at Lake Dumbleyung, a stronghold of the Whistling Eagle. They were feeding on a fox that I had shot the previous evening. This was the first occasion that I had seen Little Eagles eating food they had not captured themselves. During the meal five Whistling Eagles looked on from nearby trees.

—R. A. AITKEN, Dumbleyung.